

Monique Hageman

Van: Research
Onderwerp: New discovery???

Van: Howard Shaw <howard@shawfa.com>
Verzonden: dinsdag 11 mei 2021 17:34
Aan: Teio Meedendorp <T.Meedendorp@vangoghmuseum.nl>
Onderwerp: New discovery???

Dear Teio,

I hope this email finds you and all of my friends at the VG Museum well. Life here in NYC is returning to normal. We are enjoying beautiful spring weather and nice indoor and outdoor dining. I am optimistic that NYC will bounce back more quickly than predicted.

I hope things are returning to normal at the museum and you will soon be teeming with crowds once again.

I am reluctantly writing to you at the request of an old friend who is trying to assist the owner of the painting below (and described in the attached article). I understand the owner contacted the museum during the pandemic about this work.

Perhaps rather than an email communication, we could have a brief phone call, if you have time.

Sorry to bother you with this.

<https://whitehotmagazine.com/articles/periodic-art-hunts-in-america/4970>

Best,
Howard

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AUGUST 2021 - "THE BEST ART IN THE WORLD"

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Stuart Pivar found a Vincent van Gogh while on one of his periodic art hunts in America



Vincent van Gogh, The Wheat Fields of Auvers, 1890, Oil on canvas, 36 x 36 in. (91.4 x 91.4 cm.), New York Private Collection

By ANTHONY HADEN-GUEST May, 2021

It is at once remarkable and deliciously unsurprising that it should be Stuart Pivar who came up with a putative Vincent van Gogh while on one of his periodic art hunts in the American hinterland. Pivar first came to public attention as a near daily shopping companion of Andy Warhol who exclaims in his diaries Let's go to Stuart's house and learn about art! And Pivar is himself an

omnivorous collector, whose sizeable haul of acquisitions ranges from pre-classical antiquities via works by Raphael, Rembrandt, Velazquez and (several) Rodins to de Kooning, Pollock, Roy Lichtenstein, Haring and Basquiat.

Warhol too, of course. Who also painted Pivar's portrait and they then co-founded the New York Academy of Art on Franklin in 1982 but it speaks to Pivar's uncompromising temperament that after Warhol's death he took a dark view of the Academy's governance and they parted company, bitterly. Nor has this been Pivar's only brush with the dark side. Jeffrey Epstein was one of Pivar's clients as an art consultant and he considered him a friend but cut ties totally when the realities of Epstein's private life floated turd-like to the surface. Then there was the \$200 million case with a Philadelphia collector over the sale of a Brancusi from Pivar's collection. That piece, by the way, was one of the sculptor's strongest and best-known works, *Mademoiselle Pogany II*. Which takes us to *Wheatfields of Auvers*, the painting attributed to Vincent van Gogh you see below.

Soon after he had got hold of the canvas Pivar sent details to the Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam. Who wrote back to say that it was unknown to them and that both the museum and their authentication office had been shuttered by the virus. Pivar had already launched his own investigation though, putting it into the hands of Michael Mezzatesta, formerly with the Kimball Museum in Fort Worth and Director Emeritus of Duke University Museum of Art, who is now director of Pivar's collection, investigated the painting. Mezzatesta's commentary includes this: *The picture is in pristine original condition, painted on a coarse burlap canvas consistent with those used by van Gogh late in his career. It is unlined and in its original stretcher to which it is tacked by small 19th c. nails. The reverse of the canvas bears the signature "Vincent" in an entirely credible hand and what appears to my eye a date "1890" rendered in the fugitive walnut brown ink typical of many of van Gogh's drawings.*

The label on the back of the stretcher was another revelation as it is listed as the property of Jonas Netter, a leading collector in Paris in the early decades of the 20th c. The back of the canvas bears the numbers "2726" (a possible inventory

~~number~~?) in white chalk. The presence of a so far unidentified wax seal on the stretcher provides a further clue.

And so, persuasively, on. I will simply add that clearly this is not a “typical” van Gogh, the sort of signature work that fakers will usually produce. So, I wondered, just when had it come Pivar’s way? And how?

“Three months ago,” Pivar told me. “The only thing I won’t reveal is where I got the damn thing from. The people involved are rural people, not art people, and have only got a vague idea of what the whole thing is about. But I made promises to them. I realise I have to know how to deal with this question because it’s the only damn thing that people will be interested in. I wish I’d found it in a cabinet in a girl’s school.”

How did Pivar, who is hyper-articulate at 90 to say the least, manage to connect with the owners of the piece?

“The reason is because I spend much of my time searching around obscure places ... collections for sale ... obscure auctions,” he said. “Do you ever wonder what happens to the many, many, many art objects which get bought in at sales, which don’t get sold? Or where people walk in and take a look at the auction house and don’t sell the piece?

“What happens to all of those things which are probably the majority of things? More than probably enter the auction? You could probably stand outside of an auction house and count the number of things which walk in against the ones which walk out and count the ones which actually stay with the sale. And then with how many would sell in the sale. You could come up with some interesting math.”

Auction houses, Pivar says, are instinctually prudent, very ready with a No! when in doubt.

“There is a vast stream of buy-ins and turn-down which exist in a subterranean market, people taking pieces to dealerships, flea markets ... when you stop to think that somebody like Picasso made tens of thousands of things, Warhol

hundreds of thousands of things, the amount of this stuff floating around is huge, it reminds me of the plastic in the ocean. And the plastic pieces floating in the ocean tend to come together in ponds. Huge ponds.”

It’s just so with undocumented art, Pivar says.

“There are places where the detritus of the buy-ins, the turn-downs are accumulated by certain people. And I know who some of them are. Because I spend much of my time ... the reason I have so much stuff, and nobody else has, is because I show up, I track down things and look at obscure everythings. I do that a lot.”

What are Pivar’s main sources of information about where this stuff accumulates? Does he read the local papers?

“I peruse every available source. And if you throw enough spaghetti against the wall, something sticks. This was a major stick from an obscure place. The discovery of this painting by Van Gogh doesn’t have any equal. Other than that what do you have? An occasional Caravaggio! What an explanation? But it’s the best I can do for the moment without revealing names which are unfamiliar and unimportant.” WM



ANTHONY HADEN-GUEST

Anthony Haden-Guest (born 2 February 1937) is a British writer, reporter, cartoonist, art critic, poet, and socialite who lives in New York City and London. He is a frequent contributor to major magazines and has had several books published including *TRUE COLORS: The Real Life of the Art World* and *The Last Party, Studio 54, Disco and the Culture of the Night*.

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Vincent van Gogh, *The Wheat Fields of Auvers*, 1890
Oil on canvas, 36 x 36 in. (91.4 x 91.4 cm.)
New York Private Collection

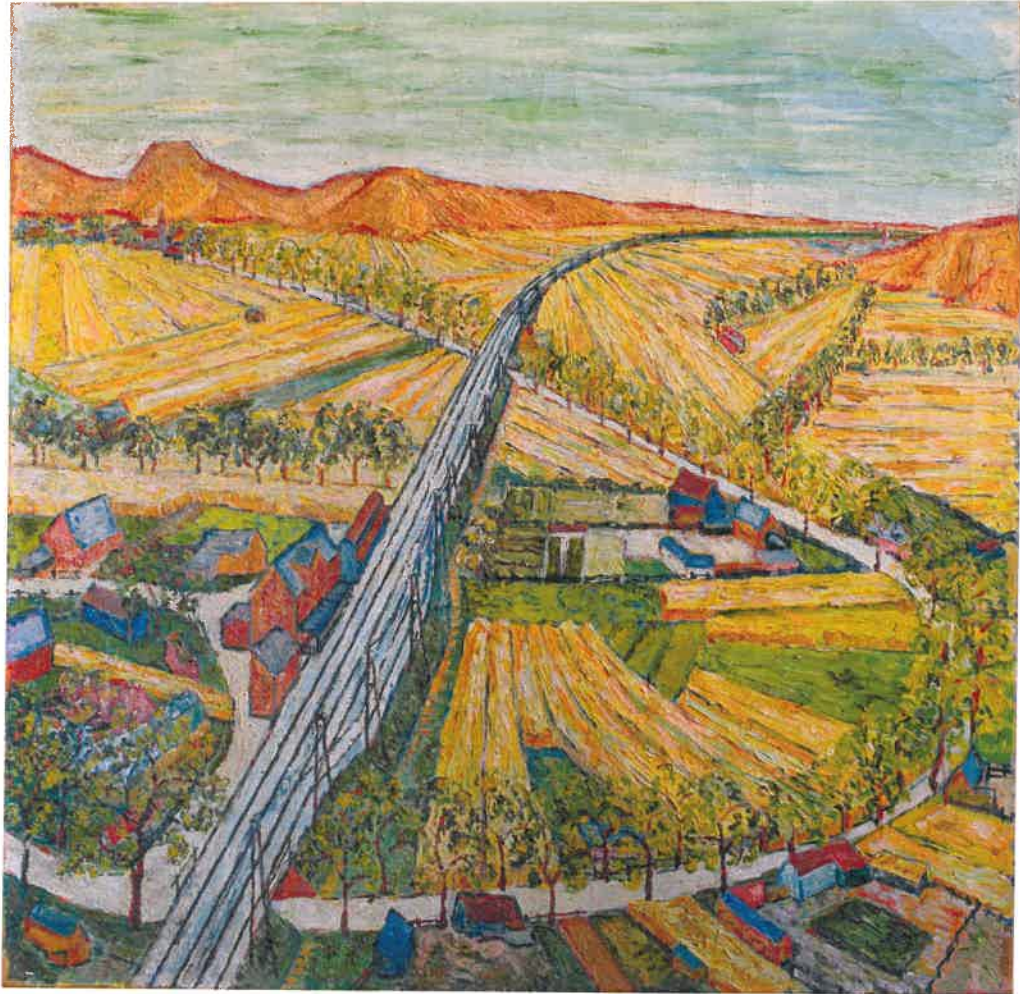


Fig. 1

Vincent van Gogh, *The Wheat Fields of Auvers*, 1890

Oil on canvas, 36 x 36 in. (91.4 x 91.4 cm.)

Signed on verso, 'Vincent'

New York Private Collection

The Wheat Fields of Auvers, Vincent van Gogh, 1890

This is the discovery of a full-size van Gogh painting, one of only two in the past 100 years. The work depicts a view of a landscape at Auvers-sur-Oise, the town north of Paris where he spent the last two months of his life. The vista shows a railroad line crossing wheat fields.

The Wheat Fields of Auvers (Figs. 1-13) is van Gogh's largest and only square painting. This unique format was chosen to represent a panorama of the wheat fields of the region, of which parts are shown in many of his other paintings of the Auvers landscape. The present painting portrays the entire valley of the Oise as a mosaic of wheat fields, bisected by the right of way of a railway and a telegraph line. The center depicts a small railway station with station houses and a rail shunt, the line disappearing into the distant horizon.

The painting is in its original, untouched condition. The support is coarse burlap on the original stretcher. The paint surface is a thick impasto that has an overall broad grid pattern of craquelure consistent with a painting of its age. The verso of the painting bears the artist's signature, *Vincent*, in black pigment. The stretcher and verso include a German tax stamp for passage of goods across borders, used in the 1930s. According to a paper label attached to the stretcher, the painting was in the collection of Jonas Netter before its dispersal.

Wheat fields had always captivated van Gogh and were the subject of many of his works from the late 1880s until his death in 1890 (see Figs. 14-23).



Fig. 2

Vincent van Gogh
The Wheat Fields of Auvers, 1890
Oil on canvas, 36 x 36 in. (91.4 x 91.4 cm.)
New York Private Collection



Fig. 3

Vincent van Gogh
The Wheat Fields of Auvers, 1890
Oil on canvas, 36 x 36 in. (91.4 x 91.4 cm.)
New York Private Collection



Fig. 4

Vincent van Gogh
The Wheat Fields of Auvers, 1890
Oil on canvas, 36 x 36 in. (91.4 x 91.4 cm.)
New York Private Collection



Fig. 5

Vincent van Gogh
The Wheat Fields of Auvers, 1890
Oil on canvas, 36 x 36 in. (91.4 x 91.4 cm.)
New York Private Collection



Fig. 6

Vincent van Gogh
The Wheat Fields of Auvers, 1890
Oil on canvas, 36 x 36 in. (91.4 x 91.4 cm.)
New York Private Collection



Fig. 7

Vincent van Gogh
The Wheat Fields of Auvers, 1890
Oil on canvas, 36 x 36 in. (91.4 x 91.4 cm.)
New York Private Collection



Fig. 8

Vincent van Gogh
The Wheat Fields of Auvers, 1890
Oil on canvas, 36 x 36 in. (91.4 x 91.4 cm.)
New York Private Collection



Fig. 9

Vincent van Gogh
The Wheat Fields of Auvers, 1890
Oil on canvas, 36 x 36 in. (91.4 x 91.4 cm.)
New York Private Collection



Fig. 10

Vincent van Gogh
The Wheat Fields of Auvers, 1890
Oil on canvas, 36 x 36 in. (91.4 x 91.4 cm.)
New York Private Collection



Fig. 11

Vincent van Gogh
The Wheat Fields of Auvers, 1890
Oil on canvas, 36 x 36 in. (91.4 x 91.4 cm.)
New York Private Collection



Fig. 12

Vincent van Gogh
The Wheat Fields of Auvers, 1890
Oil on canvas, 36 x 36 in. (91.4 x 91.4 cm.)
New York Private Collection



Fig. 13

Vincent van Gogh
The Wheat Fields of Auvers, 1890
Oil on canvas, 36 x 36 in. (91.4 x 91.4 cm.)
New York Private Collection



Fig. 14
Vincent van Gogh
Plain Near Auvers, 1890
Oil on canvas, 28.9 x 36.2 in. (73.3 x 92 cm.)
Neue Pinakothek, Munich



Fig. 15
Vincent van Gogh
View of Vessenots Near Auvers, 1890
Oil on canvas, 21.7 x 25.6 in. (55 x 65 cm.)
Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid



Fig. 16
Vincent van Gogh
Wheat Stacks with Reaper, 1890
Oil on canvas, 29 x 36.6 in. (73.6 x 93 cm.)
The Toledo Museum of Art, Toledo



Fig. 17
Vincent van Gogh
Wheat Fields at Auvers Under Clouded Sky, 1890
Oil on canvas, 28.7 x 36.2 in. (73 x 92 cm.)
Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh



Fig. 18
Vincent van Gogh
Wheat Field Under Clouded Sky, 1890
Oil on canvas, 19.7 x 39.6 in. (50 x 100.5 cm.)
Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam



Fig. 19
Vincent van Gogh
Plain Near Auvers, 1890
Oil on canvas, 19.9 x 40.5 in. (50.5 x 103 cm.)
Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam



Fig. 20

Vincent van Gogh
Wheat Field with Cornflowers, 1890
Oil on canvas, 23.6 x 31.9 in. (60 x 81 cm.)
Fondation Beyeler, Switzerland



Fig. 21

Vincent van Gogh
Vineyards with a View of Auvers, 1890
Oil on canvas, 25.3 x 31.3 in. (64.2 x 79.5 cm.)
The Saint Louis Art Museum, St. Louis



Fig. 22

Vincent van Gogh
View of Auvers, 1890
Oil on canvas, 19.7 x 20.5 in. (50 x 52 cm.)
Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam



Fig. 23

Vincent van Gogh
Landscape with Carriage and Train, 1890
Oil on canvas, 28.3 x 35.4 in. (72 x 90 cm.)
Pushkin Museum, Moscow, Russia

Dr. Michael P. Mezzatesta
The Mary D.B.T. and James H. Semans Director Emeritus
Duke University Museum of Art
Durham, North Carolina

April 30, 2021

To Whom It May Concern,

I write with regard to a newly re-discovered painting attributed to Vincent van Gogh entitled *The Wheat Fields of Auvers*. I supervised the investigation of this painting.

The picture was called to my attention a month ago following its acquisition. Upon inspection of the high-resolution images I was immediately struck by the draftsmanship, rich impasto and unique color palette which were instantly recognizable as the work of van Gogh. It was, however, the technical aspects of the presentation that are remarkable and in some cases unique.

The picture is in pristine original condition, painted on a coarse burlap canvas consistent with those used by van Gogh late in his career. It is unlined and in its original stretcher to which it is tacked by small 19th c. nails. The reverse of the canvas bears the signature "Vincent" in an entirely credible hand and what appears to my eye a date "1890" rendered in the fugitive walnut brown ink typical of many of van Gogh's drawings.

The label on the back of the stretcher was another revelation as it is listed as the property of Jonas Netter, a leading collector in Paris in the early decades of the 20th c. The back of the canvas bears the numbers "2726" (a possible inventory number?) in white chalk. The presence of a so far unidentified wax seal on the stretcher provides a further clue.

An attribution of this magnitude is always a process of discovery. Many scholars and conservators will and must offer their opinions and expertise. The process begins with visual inspection and close examination by qualified professionals in a museum setting.

It is rare for a painting of such age and importance to appear in original condition having somehow evaded conservation, re-lining, cleaning and possibly even framing. The placement of the painting in the oeuvre and its magnificent size and unique form qualify the picture as a highly important work of the artist.

I have included some comparative references from the J.B. de la Faille catalogue one might find compelling:

1. #411 *Wheat Field with the Alpilles Foothills in the Background*, 1888. Has the same deep depth of field that your painting possesses. Similar color palette as well. Line from left to right is triangular, typical of many of his works of this period.



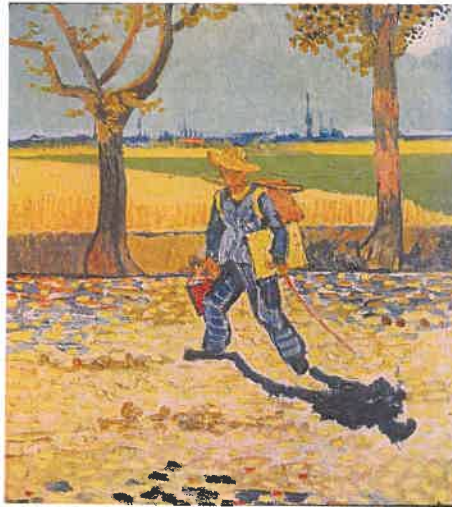
Vincent van Gogh
Wheat Field with the Alpilles Foothills in the Background, 1888
Oil on canvas, 21.3 x 25.6 in. (54 x 65 cm.)
Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam

2. #416 *View of Saintes-Maries*, 1888. This painting - the rows of color violet which represent most likely rows of lavender plants, alongside with rows of green foliage. Note the painterly, loose work, along with the artist's excellent draftsmanship and linework combined.



Vincent van Gogh
View of Saintes-Maries, 1888
Oil on canvas, 20.8 x 25.2 in. (53 x 64 cm.)
Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo, Netherlands

3. #448 *The Painter on His Way to Work*, 1888. In this painting, what caught my eye is the way the artist has drafted the edge of the wheat field that runs behind the two trees from the left to the right side of the canvas. It is similar to the edge of the wheat field in the present painting (immediately beyond the cluster of houses and barns in the lower left quadrant of work).



Vincent van Gogh
The Painter on His Way to Work, 1888
Oil on canvas, 18.8 x 17.3 in. (48 x 44 cm.)
Destroyed by fire in the Second World War;
formerly in the Kaiser-Friedrich-Museum, Magdeburg, Germany

4. #463 *The Night Café in the Place Lamartine in Arles*, 1888. Look at the signature — bottom right — which matches the signature in the present painting quite well.



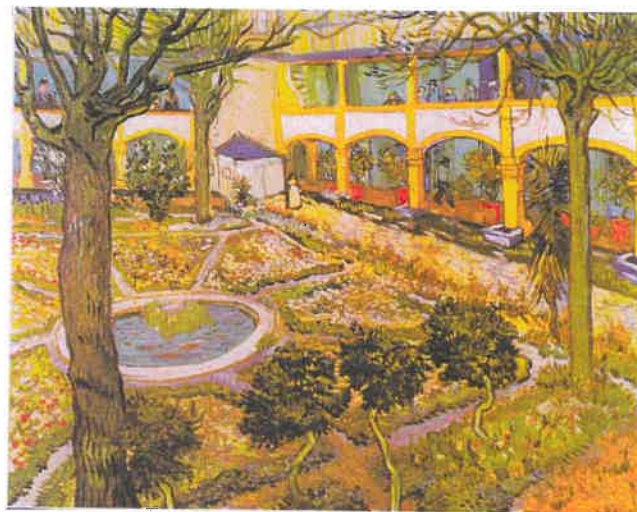
Vincent van Gogh
The Night Café in the Place Lamartine in Arles, 1888
Oil on canvas, 28.5 x 36.3 in. (72.4 x 92.1cm.)
Yale University Art Gallery

5. #475 *The Green Vineyard*, 1888. Note the triangular line that starts to the left of the canvas moving to the right side, becoming thinner, narrowing, as it does in *The Starry Night* as well as the present painting.



Vincent van Gogh
The Green Vineyard, 1888
Oil on canvas, 28.9 x 36.4 in. (73.5 x 92.5 cm.)
Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo, Netherlands

6. #519 *The Courtyard of the Hospital at Arles*, 1889. The fountain in the courtyard with its number of extending spokes/pathways going out from the fountain remind me of how some of the pathways and roads are featured in the present painting, along with being very loosely painted.



Vincent van Gogh
The Courtyard of the Hospital at Arles, 1889
Oil on canvas, 28.7 x 36.2 in. (73.0 x 92.0 cm.)
Oskar Reinhart Collection, Winterthur, Switzerland

7. #781 *Wheat Fields near Auvers*, 1890. Notice the great depth of field and less attention to sky, as with the present painting. The same with #782 *Plain near Auvers*, 1890: note the great depth of field and patchwork of crops in different shades of yellow, green and blue green, similar to the palette of the present painting.



Vincent van Gogh
Wheat Fields near Auvers, 1890
 Oil on canvas, 19.7 x 39.8 in. (50 x 101 cm.)
 Österreichische Galerie Belvedere, Vienna



Vincent van Gogh
Plain near Auvers, 1890
 Oil on canvas, 28.9 x 36.2 in. (73.5 x 92 cm.)
 Neue Pinakothek, Munich, Germany

8. *Laundry on 'La Roubine du Roi' canal* is a drawing on paper (there is a painting #427 in the De La Faille catalogue of this drawing as well). I have brought the drawing to your attention as I feel the drawing is more interesting in its draftsmanship and overall linework than the painting. Again, this work shows the swooping triangulation starting wide at the upper far left edge and moving to a point at the far right.



Vincent van Gogh
Laundry on 'La Roubine du Roi' canal, 1888
 Pen and reed pen in black ink on wove paper
 12.5 x 9.5 in. (31.8 x 24.2 cm.)
 Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo, Netherlands